

Message Text

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ACTION COME-00

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FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: BEXP, ECRE, GB, US

SUBJ: GABON'S MINERAL PORT

REF: LIBREVILLE 0385

1. GAVARY, PRESIDENT SETIMEG, ASKED TO SEE ME MARCH 15 AND COVEYED FOLLOWING. HE SAID HE HAD JUST SEEN PRESIDENT BONGO WHO HAD TOLD HIM THAT HE (BONGO) HAD DECIDED THAT, INASMUCH AS FRENCH HAD RECEIVED LION'S SHARE OF RAILROAD BUSINESS, HE WISHED TO GIVE MINERAL PORT BUSINESS TO AMERICANS. HE WAS THEREFORE GIVING GREEN LIGHT FOR SOROS TO DO ENGINEERING WORK AND WOULD LIKE TO HAVE U.S. COMPANY (BONGO MENTIONED DRAVO) DO CONSTRUCTION, WORKING WITH SETIMEG. GABARY SAID HE HAD BEEN ASKED TO PASS THIS ON TO ME AND HE ADDED THAT SETIMEG READY TO MAKE CONTACT WITH U.S. FIRMS.

2. EMBASSY COMMENT: ALTHOUGH I WILL SEEK CONFIRMATION FROM BONGO OF ABOVE, I HAVE NO REASON TO DOUBT ITS ACCURACY. BONGO HAD VIRTUALLY SAID SAME THING TO ME DURING CALL ON HIM WITH FNCB REPS MARCH 14 ALTHOUGH HE WAS LESS CATEGORICAL AND DID NOT MENTION SETIMEG. BELIEVE IT HIGHLY UNLIKELY GAVARY WOULD HAVE STATED TO ME THAT BONGO WISHED INCLUSION OF SETIMEG UNLESS THIS TRUE AS IT WOULD BE SO EASY FOR ME TO CHECK. ALSO CONFORMS TO PATTERN OF BONGO'S MODUS OPERANDI. GAVARY VERY CLOSE TO BONGO AND INVOLVED IN GREAT MANY PROJECTS HERE (SOGACEL, OWENDO RAILROAD TERMINAL, BONGO'S PALACE, NEW DIALOGUE HOTEL, NEW FOREIGN MINISTRY, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ETC). ROLE OF SETIMEG (ACTING GENERALLY THROUGH ONE OF ITS

TWO LOCAL COMPANIES SOGAPROM AND SOGAFINEX) IS TO PUT TOGETHER PACKAGE FOR BUILDING HOTEL, SETTING UP NEW INDUSTRY AND SO FORTH BY ARRANGING FINANCING, GETTING CONSTRUCTION FIRM, ARCHITECT AND EQUIPMENT IF NECESSARY, AND CHARGING FEE (PERCENTAGE OF COST) FOR ITS ROLE.

3. REALIZE THAT SOROS AND DRAVO (IF LATTER GETS CONTRACT) MAY FEEL THEY CAN DO JOB WITHOUT SETIMEG). BELIEVE IT WOULD BE WISE TO GO ALONG, HOWEVER, IN VIEW (A) IT APPARENTLY BONGO'S WISH AND HE COULD GET ANGRY AND WITHDRAW CONTRACT FROM AMERICANS IF HE FELT THEY OPPOSING HIM BY TRYING TO EXCLUDE SETIMEG, (B) SETIMEG WITH IT CONTACTS HERE CAN DOUBTLESS BE HELPFUL, AND (C) U.S. FIRMS STAND TO LOSE NOTHING FINANCIALLY AS THEY CAN PRESUMABLY ADD SETIMEG'S FEE TO THEIR CONTRACT.
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